

NEWS RELEASE

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SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

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For Immediate Release

July 11, 2005

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that **TONY D. WATTS**, age 53, of Carmi, Illinois, pled guilty in United States District Court in Benton on July 11, 2005, to one count of conspiring with at least 13 other individuals to manufacture, distribute, and possess with intent to distribute over 500 grams of methamphetamine in White, Gallatin, and Saline Counties in Illinois, and elsewhere in the United States. WATTS was charged with the offense by a Federal Grand Jury on January 4, 2005. The indictment alleges the offense occurred between January 1998 and continued up to the date of the indictment.

Sentencing for WATTS was set for October 24, 2005. WATTS will face a minimum sentence of 20 years imprisonment and a maximum sentence of life, a fine of up to \$8 million, and a term of supervised release to follow his incarceration of at least 10 years.

WATTS has been held without bond in the custody of the United States Marshal since indictment and was returned to the Marshal's custody pending sentencing.

Information for the indictment was obtained through the cooperative efforts of the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force, the Illinois State Police, the White County State's Attorney's Office, the White County Sheriff's Department, the Carmi Police Department, the Shawneetown Police Department, the Gallatin County State's Attorney's Office, the Gallatin County Sheriff's Department, the Saline County State's Attorney's Office, the Saline County Sheriff's Department, the Posey County, Indiana, Narcotics Task Force, the United States Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James M. Cutchin.